United Nations S/PV.6000

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

6000th meeting

Thursday, 23 October 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Zhang Yesui	(China)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Note verbale dated 3 October 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Djibouti to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/635)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-56550 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Note verbale dated 3 October 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Djibouti to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/635)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Djibouti and Eritrea, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedures.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, to a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Desta (Eritrea) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in response to a note verbale dated 3 October 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Djibouti to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, contained in document S/2008/635.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti.

President Guelleh (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Security Council for making it possible to hold this exchange with the Council today.

We are at a crossroads in Africa. Against all predictions, many of our countries are booming and making gradual progress and now have genuine prospects. That is thanks to better macroeconomic management and growing confidence on the part of international investors in the potential of the continent. We are now in a period of unprecedented economic growth. Although its effects cannot be denied, the current financial crisis may have a relatively minimal impact. Nevertheless, as in other parts of the world, increased food and energy prices are making the situation on the continent more complicated. In that regard, I should very much like to acknowledge and thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts and leadership in raising international awareness of the harmful and devastating effects of high food and energy prices, especially on the most vulnerable in the developing world.

Over the past three decades, my country, which is a small, peace-loving and progressive, has been able to survive and preserve its stability in the face of several ongoing regional wars and violent civil conflicts. These continue to be tumultuous times characterized by pain, human sadness and great poverty. Unfortunately, the Horn of Africa continues to experience more than its fair share of unhappiness, tragedy, dislocation and destruction. That is untenable in human, social, economic and political terms. In that regard, as it did in the past in connection with the Economic Community of West African States, the Council may wish to take an in-depth look at that hotbed of regional tension.

Somalia in particular is in ruins. It has been involved in a bloody conflict that is distinct from the long self-destructive war that has been waged by warlords. It is no longer an exclusively a Somali affair — not that it ever was. It therefore requires full, transparent, honest and neutral regional and international involvement to determine once and for all the destiny of a people whose future as a nation is at stake. The increased international attention to the piracy along the Somali coast is understandable and legitimate, but let us not lose sight of the crucial fact that the piracy is part of the growing chaos in Somalia. It is a symptom of the power vacuum in that country, whose current political structure is too fragile, weak and coming apart; it does not enjoy the respect, interest

or trust of the Somali people. In addition, it appears to be its own worst enemy. Unfortunately, Somalia is a country that continues to be hostage to divergent political, strategic and economic interests. Half of its population requires emergency humanitarian assistance. The people of Somalia suffer from one of the highest levels of displacement, drought, unemployment and inflation

The region, the United Nations, the African Union and other regional organizations are deeply committed to the re-establishment of peace and stability in Somalia. To that end, a crucial meeting is planned for the end of this month at Nairobi. We have a collective moral and legal responsibility to pay much more attention to that forgotten conflict and the crisis in Somalia. In the context of international peace and security, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for saving that country from its unavoidable descent into a nightmare of national destruction. The Council bears the weighty responsibility of resolutely deciding that it is time to protect the people living in that chaotic situation. Our failure to act will have serious consequences. I therefore call on the Council to act now and to act responsibly.

Following the abrupt, inexplicable and ill-considered forceful occupation of part of Djibouti's territory by Eritrean forces earlier this year, my country has adopted a policy of calm and caution that has provided sufficient time for bilateral contacts at all levels to resolve our differences amicably and peacefully. All of our efforts have been in vain, however, for Eritrea's military construction on the ground continues. Given that brazen and illegal situation, the lack of cooperation on the part of the Eritrean authorities and their failure to respond to our initiatives, we have been left with no choice but to mass our troops along the border to protect our territorial integrity.

Despite the military confrontation imposed on us, we have also sought out the good offices of the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the United Nations and friendly States. While we have been tireless in the search for a peaceful and diplomatic solution, Eritrea has continued to reinforce its troops and has carried out further incursions into our territory. Intensive and sustained regional and international efforts to find a solution to the crisis have been met only with disdain and outright rejection by the Eritrean authorities. Eritrea's response, which continues to be misguided, arrogant and fallacious, illustrates its contempt for our efforts and those of regional organizations and the United Nations.

Immediately following the armed conflict of 10 June 2008, which resulted in dozens of victims and the taking of prisoners on both sides, the Security Council condemned the Eritrean authorities. That condemnation was supported by many countries and regional organizations. Thereafter, the Security Council deployed a fact-finding mission to Djibouti to assess the situation in the region of Doumeira and the growing tensions between the two countries. The results of the mission are before the Council today. The conclusions are serious, clear and unquestionable. They reflect the erratic and irresponsible behaviour of the Eritrean regime, as well as its deliberate and dishonest misrepresentation of the facts.

The various calls of the international community have been met with deafening silence and a blatant denial that any crisis or conflict exists in the region. When they have deigned to reply, the Eritrean authorities have made mind-boggling and baseless allegations of foreign interference. Allow me to remind the Council that the high point of the United Nations fact-finding mission was a visit to the Doumeira region, where its members were able to observe the deployment of the two forces.

Given that Eritrea remains blind to the seriousness of the situation and continues to reject all attempts by regional and international organizations to convene talks, including the efforts of the United Nations to defuse tensions, it is becoming increasingly clear that Eritrea does not want to respect international norms and obligations. It is therefore utopian to believe that we can make even a modicum of progress towards dialogue or the normalization of relations in the face of a silent and unreasonable aggressor. It takes two parties to hold a discussion.

I would like to reiterate here the determination of my country to recover all its territory now illegally occupied by Eritrea — Ras Doumeira and the Doumeira islands. Our forces have withdrawn a few kilometres from the contested area, in conformity with the presidential statement of 12 June 2008 (S/PRST/2008/20), which stipulated that the two parties must show the greatest restraint possible and

withdraw their forces in order to return to the status quo ante.

The impasse imposed on us by Eritrea is intolerable and unacceptable. The provocation and inexplicable invasion of our territory are totally unacceptable. It is imperative that the Council address the conflict between Eritrea and my country in a timely and comprehensive manner. We have waited long enough and have given the Eritrean authorities more opportunities than they deserve to accept dialogue and negotiation instead of confrontation.

However, their decision has been taken. Their choice is very clear, because they continue to ignore the urgent appeals of the Security Council and regional bodies, which are simply trying to solve the conflict — which will have a much broader effect on the region and even on the international community — in a peaceful manner. Without a doubt, the last thing that the Horn of Africa needs today is another conflict in the heart of the region. Given the never-ending wars that have dominated and devastated the region for too long, the consequences of another war are obvious and dangerous.

We know that the Eritrean people in no way wish to have an armed conflict with the Republic of Djibouti. They are aware of our long-standing friendship and of the fact that the Djiboutian nation has been a peace-loving nation ever since its independence. The Eritrean people are the victims of bad governance and of the irresponsible, pernicious and unreasonable behaviour of their leaders. To put those people, who have suffered far too much from the belligerent attitudes of their leaders, on the warpath with a neighbouring and brotherly country once again is a deplorable and morally reprehensible act.

I would ask the members of the Security Council to remain very vigilant. I would also alert them to the danger posed by drawing comparisons between the current conflict and that between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Indeed, if there is any similarity between those two conflicts, it is only because they share the same destabilizing and destructive element: Eritrea, which is directly or indirectly mixed up in every conflict in the Horn of Africa. It is therefore not only imprudent but dangerous to suggest such a link, which would only encourage Eritrea to indefinitely occupy our territory, lead its people into other useless, fratricidal conflicts, and continue its unbridled adventurism in the region.

I would invite the Council to consider in its discussion, and with a view to taking a decision, the following key points, which are broadly illustrated in the mission's report (S/2008/602).

First, Eritrea, as a State Member of the United Nations, must be called upon in earnest to honour its international obligations and to cooperate with this Organization with a view to accepting its good offices to resolve the crisis.

Secondly, the immediate priority for my country is the demilitarization of the conflict area and the withdrawal of the forces of the two countries to their pre-February 2008 positions.

Thirdly, the two countries must show themselves fully willing to re-establish mutual trust, particularly by activating the existing bilateral mechanisms and submitting to a legal process or arbitration leading to an agreed demarcation of the border. We invite the Council to implement those ideas in order to convince Eritrea to withdraw from the zones that it has occupied since March 2008.

In conclusion, given the seriousness and urgency of the situation, I call on the Council to require both countries, within a period of approximately three weeks at the latest, to devote themselves fundamentally to resolving the crisis. Any failure to implement such a decision should give rise to the implementation of sanctions by the Council. The aggression against my country must not be ignored, remain unpunished or, even worse, be taken lightly by this Council.

Continued inaction in whatever form will not only encourage but reward Eritrea's attitude. That would leave my country with but one option: the option of war. We would like the Council to take urgent and effective action on this issue. The conflict represents a financial black hole, an enormous burden on our limited resources and a distraction from our development objectives. My people expect understanding and support from this Council.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the President of the Republic of Djibouti for his statement.

I invite the representative of Eritrea to take the floor.

Mr. Desta (Eritrea): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, and the members of the Security Council for the opportunity accorded to my delegation to

participate in this meeting of the Council requested by His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, in connection with the so-called Djibouti-Eritrea question, under the agenda item "Peace and security in Africa".

On 24 June 2008, during a similar meeting of the Security Council attended by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Djibouti, my delegation expressed its views on how the crisis was instigated and had been internationalized. The series of hostile campaigns waged against Eritrea and the unwarranted statements that followed without any concrete evidence were also addressed. I do not wish, therefore, to dwell on the genesis of the manufactured problem, but allow me to briefly highlight the following points.

There have been no new developments since the brief incident in June that was instigated by the unprovoked attack unleashed by Djibouti against our units inside our own territory. The deliberate design to unleash a new crisis in our region has fortunately been forestalled.

Despite the negative campaigns, Eritrea has all along chosen the path of restraint and patience in order to avoid falling into the trap of escalating a crisis not of Djibouti's making but created by others. Contrary to the claims made, Eritrea has not taken any land that belongs to Djibouti, and it does not have any territorial ambitions.

Although this is not related to the issue at hand, Eritrea has communicated its security concerns about the Eritrea-Ethiopia-Djibouti border area, as stated in document S/2008/446. Ethiopia has set up a new military camp on Mount Musa Ali, perched at the junction of the three countries. Ethiopia has built, from the Djiboutian side, a network of roads winding up the mountain and deployed offensive long-range artillery and heavy equipment directed at Eritrea.

Eritrea would also like to take this occasion to remind Council members that Ethiopia continues to occupy sovereign Eritrean territories in violation of the United Nations Charter and the Algiers Peace Agreement. Members have received the most recent report of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, which identifies the dimensions of the problem with full clarity and will be addressed exhaustively in due time.

As far as this manufactured problem with Djibouti is concerned, it must be recalled that the two leaders had spoken about the issue when President Isaias Afwerki took the initiative to call President Guelleh and decided to address it in a calm and quiet manner that takes into account the sisterly ties that existed between the two countries and the need to ensure peace and security in the subregion. This occurred when Eritrea was approached by the Emir of Qatar, to whom Eritrea showed its openness to solve any real or perceived source of problems between the two States.

Eritrea's desire continues to be the restoration and cultivation of good-neighbourly relations with Djibouti on the basis of full mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. However, Eritrea will not allow itself to be dragged into or invited to engage in a diversionary and fabricated conflict, or to be obliged to have an exchange on a situation designed to foment conflict on the ground.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by welcoming the presence of the President of Djibouti, Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti and the Permanent Representative of Eritrea.

The delegation of France listened with a great deal of interest to the presentations just made. The conflict that opposes Eritrea to Djibouti has entered into a less critical phase. The situation at the border between the two countries remains tense but calm. There is no more fighting on Ras Doumeira or on Doumeira Island, and there is no further contact between the armed forces of the two States. This progress is attributable solely to Djibouti which, in accordance with the Security Council's presidential statement of 12 June (S/PRST/2008/20), withdrew its forces to the status quo ante, ensuring that the two armies were no longer in contact with each other.

Our Security Council should not lose sight of what is important: deadly clashes took place at Doumeira in June, for which Eritrea was responsible, and the effects of that aggression continue. The Security Council has unambiguously condemned Eritrea, in its 12 June presidential statement. The report of the United Nations fact-finding mission (S/2008/602) established that, unlike Djibouti, Eritrea

had not withdrawn its troops to the status quo ante. The top priority, thus, is for Eritrea to meet the very clear demand of the Security Council.

The resolution of this crisis requires that both countries settle the issue of the delimitation of their common border. It is a complex issue, especially because the agreement that still regulates the border is from a time when neither of the parties existed as a sovereign State. The border has never been demarcated, and this uncertainty twice led to tensions between the two countries in the 1990s.

It is thus incumbent upon both parties to determine the framework within which they will ease their differences. France, like others, has on a number of occasions offered its expertise if that could be of assistance. The reference agreements were a Franco-Ethiopian treaty of 1897 and two Franco-Italian protocols of 1900 and 1901 respectively. This, however, requires dialogue between both parties, which is currently non-existent.

At this stage, the Eritrean authorities have rejected all proposals for dialogue. Eritrea has not issued visas to the United Nations fact-finding mission, even when the President of the Security Council called upon the parties to facilitate the mission. Eritrea refused to admit similar missions proposed by the League of Arab States and the African Union. Nor did it respond positively to the Secretary-General's offer of good offices or to the various proposals for dialogue on this issue by multilateral organizations and various United Nations Member States.

The second priority is that Eritrean authorities recognize that a crisis exists in Doumeira and that they be willing to talk about it. Last Friday's visit to Asmara by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission gives us reason to hope that Eritrea will finally agree to resume dialogue with the international community. France would like to convey its gratitude to Mr. Jean Ping for his efforts and encourages the African Union to make progress in this field to ensure that a genuine channel of communication be established, which would make it possible to finally discuss the crisis between Djibouti and Eritrea.

France is also convinced that the United Nations Secretariat has a very positive role to play. It hopes that the Secretary-General be able to formalize his proposal of good offices to Eritrea and dispatch a mission to the area.

France considers that the continuation of this crisis and Eritrea's rejection of all dialogue represent a serious threat to Djibouti and the entire region. Djibouti and France are linked by long-standing relations of friendship and cooperation, based on trust. In this framework, France intends to comply fully with all the obligations that link it to Djibouti.

The parties will be able to resolve their border dispute only through dialogue. It is unacceptable, therefore, for one of the parties to be able to indefinitely prolong the crisis, which is dangerous both for Djibouti and for the whole of the Horn of Africa.

As President Guelleh underscored a few minutes ago, that region, which has already been racked by war and affected by the ongoing humanitarian tragedy in Somalia, has experienced its share of conflict. France stresses that no preconditions can be placed on resolving the border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea.

France would like the Council to return to this issue in the near future. My delegation therefore proposes to rapidly engage in bilateral consultations so that, when the time comes, a draft text can be proposed to the Council. This would firmly reiterate the Council's demands on Eritrea, in particular regarding the withdrawal of its forces; it would condemn Eritrea if it continues to reject any dialogue on the subject; and it would encourage the efforts of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. These demands should be accompanied by a clear timeline. It is our responsibility and the responsibility of the Council to closely follow this issue.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I should like to welcome His Excellency Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, and his delegation, who honour us by apprising us of developments in the conflict between his country and Eritrea. We especially thank him for the important statement he has just made to the Council. I also welcome the presence of Ambassador Araya Desta, Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations.

We note that this is the second time that Djibouti has appeared before the Security Council represented at a very high level. The first time, it was represented by the head of Government, and this time it is represented by the head of State himself. I mention this

to show the extent to which the commitment of the Government of Djibouti, at the very highest level, bears witness to the trust which it places in the United Nations to assist in resolving this unfortunate situation. It is only right therefore to pay tribute to the authorities of Djibouti for the good will they have always shown in seeking a final solution to the dispute.

The region of the Horn of Africa is already wracked by too many conflicts and many other challenges, as the President of Djibouti so aptly underscored, to suffer yet another adversarial front. That is why the delegation of Burkina Faso deplores the continuing tension between Djibouti and Eritrea, which are brotherly countries united by historical and long lasting ties.

But what can and must the Security Council do? One thing is certain. The Council has already shown its resolve to remain fully involved in the conflict, particularly, through the dispatch of a fact-finding mission to better understand the situation, even though, unfortunately, that mission was not received by one of the parties. Moreover, the Council has sent a clear message to Eritrea and to Djibouti in its presidential statement of June 2008 on the issue (S/PRST/2008/20).

Following the statements that we have just heard, it is clear that it is incumbent upon the Council to reaffirm to the international community the guiding principles that can help in restoring normalcy: first, the withdrawal of all forces to their initial positions, in other words their positions before the conflict; secondly, the demilitarization of the disputed area; thirdly, the commitment in good faith and with the full trust of both parties to refrain from the use of force; and finally, the acceptance by both countries to sit at the negotiating table to address their differences. And if one of the parties refuses to engage in that direct dialogue, the two States can resort to other forms of conciliation, either arbitration or facilitation, which are, as we know, two ways to settle disputes recognized by international law, or even resort to litigation, which has been successful in similar situations.

If the Council is not able to resolve the dispute — and we hope that the Security Council will strive to, and will succeed in, resolving it — but if that is not possible, we believe that the Council should back, with its full influence, the use of one or other of those two options.

In conclusion, we should like to pay tribute to all the initiatives and all the efforts undertaken in that regard. We especially pay tribute to the efforts undertaken by the African Union and the League of Arab States. We reiterate our gratitude to Djibouti for its cooperation with the United Nations fact-finding mission and, naturally, we back the Secretary-General's offer of his good offices to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. We again invite both parties to accept that offer.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like, in turn, to welcome the presence of the President of the Republic of Djibouti, Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, in our discussion and to thank him for his address. I also wish to thank our colleague, the Ambassador of Eritrea, Mr. Desta, for the presentation that he has just made spelling out his country's position.

Belgium shares the concern of the Republic of Djibouti in the face of the complete absence of any progress since the clashes with Eritrea last June. Belgium also welcomes the moderation and restraint that the Republic of Djibouti has shown thus far, and we encourage it to continue to adopt that approach.

In June, our Council condemned the military action conducted by Eritrea in Ras Doumeira and on Doumeira Island. At the same time, it encouraged both States to cooperate by offering the assistance of the United Nations, potentially in cooperation with the other offers, particularly from the African Union and the League of Arab States.

Eritrea refused that dialogue with Djibouti, and that is what has led Djibouti to bring the issue before our Council. Today, we are forced to note that Eritrea seems no more inclined to engage in dialogue with the United Nations, the African Union, the League of Arab States or any other mediator.

Eritrea tells us that it is not occupying any parcel of Djibouti territory, unlike its Ethiopian neighbour, which is occupying large areas of Eritrea across a border very precisely delineated by an arbitral decision.

Last July, the United Nations decided to withdraw from the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea, having been unable to help the two States to find common ground, despite having left no stone unturned to achieve that. Here too, neither the good offices of the

Secretary-General nor the constructive proposals presented to the parties by the Security Council were able to make any progress. Rather than building on an arbitral ruling in its favour, Eritrea chose the path of isolation.

Eritrea is a Member State of this Organization and must, therefore, comply with its obligations under the Charter. The peaceful settlement of disputes and the non-use of the threat of or the use of force lie at its very core. There is a need to remind Eritrea that those obligations are the counterpart of its rights and privileges as a Member of the Organization.

Even if a solution to the border dispute with Ethiopia could, we all agree, stand to benefit the whole of the Horn of Africa, there can be no question of linking that dispute with that with Djibouti. For Ethiopia, an arbitral ruling exists, and the recognized solution is to implement that ruling following a very precise road map. For Djibouti, there would be merit to delineating the border carefully, and our Council should invite the parties to start such a process.

There will be no solution without dialogue. Therefore, Eritrea must be invited to accept such a dialogue and to establish the necessary conditions for it as soon as possible. Our Council should revisit that issue.

Insofar as four months have passed since the June presidential statement, it is our duty to spare no effort to ensure that calm rapidly returns to that hotbed of tension.

Belgium continues to believe that the hand held out to Eritrea by the international community will in the end be seized for the good of the people of that region, which is well understood. However, to achieve that, the Council will have to continue to involve itself and the Secretary-General will have to step up his efforts, so as to establish the conditions for that normalization.

Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy): I wish to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, and to his delegation and to thank him for providing the Council with updated information and views on the situation around the border with Eritrea. What His Excellency Ismail Omar Guelleh has just said about Somalia is fully and vigorously shared by my country. The tragedy affecting the Somali people and the wider regional impact the Somali crisis is having requires an adequate and urgent response by the international community and by this Council.

I would also like to reiterate my Government's appreciation for the efforts made by the President of the Republic of Djibouti in the reconciliation process in Somalia. I also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of Eritrea, Ambassador Desta, for taking part in today's debate and conveying his Government's perspective.

Italy shares the concerns expressed by President Guelleh on the ongoing militarization of the area of Ras Doumeira, which could become another source of instability in a region already strained by heavy security and by humanitarian and development challenges.

Italy commends the Government of Djibouti for the restraint exercised since the outbreak of this situation, as well as for having withdrawn its troops, as requested of both parties by the Security Council presidential statement of 12 June (S/PRST/2008/20). In the face of its repeated offers to engage, Djibouti's sense of frustration is understandable and deserves our full solidarity.

Conversely, my country regrets the lack of engagement of Eritrea with regional and United Nations efforts to facilitate a bilateral settlement, in particular the fact that the Eritrean forces have not responded to international calls for withdrawal and the lack of cooperation with the United Nations fact-finding mission. I hope that the presence of Ambassador Desta among us today and his contribution to the debate may be a sign of renewed will to take part constructively in a solution to the present situation.

The United Nations fact-finding mission has produced a balanced and informative report (S/2008/602) that provides a number of useful proposals. Reactivating dialogue and returning to the status quo ante are immediate priorities that need to be accompanied by long-term sustainable solutions. My Government shares the view contained in the report that the final settlement of the border between Djibouti and Eritrea would be a real contribution to resolving the current crisis. We encourage both parties to agree on a framework to address this issue from a legal perspective. Like France, Italy is ready to place at the disposal of the parties its historical and technical

knowledge of the process leading to the current border situation.

We see the need for a consistent approach to all border disputes in the subregion. The dispute between Yemen and Eritrea was resolved by a decision of the International Court of Justice. The border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea was entrusted by the parties to the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, whose decisions need to be applied on the ground. We do not see why a similar model cannot be found by Djibouti and Eritrea to settle the border issue in Ras Doumeira.

Finally, I would like to like to stress the importance of the facilitating role of regional organizations, namely the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and the League of Arab States, whose efforts must be fully sustained by the Security Council. A close collaboration between those efforts and initiatives of the Security Council is the key to a successful conflict prevention strategy. At the same time, we should make sure that the present crisis does not disappear from the radar screen of the Council and that progress is closely monitored in order that we can adjust our action accordingly.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): Our thanks go to President Guelleh for his very clear and informative briefing. It is good to have the Foreign Minister of Djibouti with us here as well. I am grateful to Ambassador Desta of Eritrea for his statement.

I would like to begin by expressing my Government's deep sympathy with the concerns raised by President Guelleh. We understand the concern on the Djibouti side at the action of Eritrea and the burden that that has imposed on Djibouti owing to the need to divert scarce resources to help defend its position. The United Kingdom commends Djibouti for its constructive response in recent months and for cooperating with the Secretary-General's good offices. We look to Eritrea to take an equally cooperative approach.

We reiterate the Council's message set out in the presidential statement of 12 June (S/PRST/2008/20), which urged Eritrea, in particular, to withdraw its forces to the status quo ante. It is deeply regrettable that Eritrea rejected the Secretary-General's good offices mission as carried out by Under-Secretary-General Pascoe. Should Eritrea continue to block international efforts to facilitate dialogue, determine future arrangements for decreasing the military presence and develop confidence-building measures, the Security Council will need to consider what steps it might take to break the impasse. We welcome the planned action by our French colleagues in this regard.

The visit by African Union Chairman Jean Ping to Eritrea is a positive step, and we hope that that will prove to be a useful channel for making progress.

We urge both Djibouti and Eritrea to enter a dialogue to resolve their dispute on the border peacefully. We encourage the Secretary-General to continue to use his good offices in an effort to foster a dialogue between the two countries. We also encourage those in the region to use their good relations with either party in support of a peaceful resolution of this unnecessary dispute.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): On behalf of the Indonesian delegation, I have the pleasure of welcoming the participation in today's Security Council meeting of the President of the Republic of Djibouti, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh. We listened attentively to his statement and, of course, to the statement of the Permanent Representative of Eritrea.

The situation between Djibouti and Eritrea is a cause of concern for Indonesia. The situation poses real danger for both countries and, beyond, for the region. It is thus a problem that needs to be resolved peacefully.

We thank the Secretary-General for his follow-up to the Security Council's request to send a fact-finding mission to the region. We regret that the mission, while it visited Djibouti, was unable to go to Eritrea; this deprived us of an opportunity to have an explanation of the views of one of the key parties. We would benefit from clarification of the nature of the current situation from the perspective of all the parties. Today's deliberations will go some way in addressing that need.

The efforts of various parties, in particular the African Union, the League of Arab States and Intergovernmental Authority on Development, to assist in bridging the two parties' differences are welcome and should be commended.

The Security Council's consideration of the Djibouti-Eritrea issue needs not only to address the tension itself, but also to support the resolution of the underlying causes, including the border problem. The

parties may deny having aggressive intentions, territorial ambitions or an intention to allow the situation to slide into a full blown conflagration, and indeed there are no reasons to believe otherwise. Notwithstanding their intentions, however, the situation could develop in an unanticipated direction and take on a logic of its own towards wider conflagration, as many conflicts do.

We therefore welcome the report of Djibouti's withdrawal of its forces to the status quo ante. A similar step by Eritrea would be equally welcome. Furthermore, both sides need to commence diplomatic and judicial approaches to settle their dispute, either directly or with the involvement of a third party. It is our belief that the resolution of the current crisis cannot be based on the status quo, which will not be sustainable. There is a danger in letting the situation on the border fester without a resolution.

We urge both countries to redouble their efforts to determine and demarcate their border as soon as possible. They need to come together to discuss and find mutually acceptable ways and means to do so. Both countries should see it as being in their vital interest to resolve the border problem peacefully.

Finally, we recognize the linkages between the tension between the two countries and the broader security issues in the Horn of Africa. The report of the United Nations fact-finding mission (S/2008/602) made a connection between this issue and the Eritrea-Ethiopia border problem. While we wish to avoid blurring the two issues, the fact that these countries are geographically in proximity to each other needs to be recognized.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the President of the Republic of Djibouti, Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh. We listened attentively to his statement. We also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti. We acknowledge the assessment, to which we listened. We also listened with attention to the representative of Eritrea.

A month ago the Security Council considered the report of the fact-finding mission that visited the region from 28 July to 6 August (see S/2008/602). The Russian delegation notes that the report provides a detailed picture of the history of that border dispute, as well as the chronology of many events that led to a drastic escalation of the situation and armed clashes from 10 to 12 June.

The Russian Federation expressed serious concerns regarding the June events, which claimed the lives of dozens of individuals. Along with other members of the Security Council, we condemned Eritrea's military actions against Djibouti in Ras Doumeira and the island of Doumeira. We again call on both sides to undertake to respect the ceasefire and to show maximum restraint. Eritrea should immediately withdrawal its forces to the former positions.

We are carefully following the development of the situation on the Djibouti-Eritrea border. We believe border problems should be settled exclusively by negotiations, and we call on both sides, especially Eritrea, to cooperate with each other and to undertake diplomatic steps to resolve the issue peacefully, in strict compliance with international law and the United Nations Charter.

We back the efforts by the African Union, the League of Arab States and other organizations and individual States aimed at the rapid settlement of the crisis and at normalization of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea. We call on both sides to fully cooperate in this process. We await implementation of the Security Council's recommendations to the Secretary-General for the immediate use of his good offices, in coordination with regional efforts, to help promote bilateral negotiations between Djibouti and Eritrea in order to ease tensions by political means, developing methods to strengthen mutual trust and the peaceful settlement of the border situation. We hope that Eritrea will agree to such a good offices mission.

We back the idea regarding the usefulness of international high-level mediation acceptable to both Djibouti and Eritrea. We reaffirm our readiness to carefully follow, along with other Security Council members, developments in the situation between the two States so that it does not grow into a dangerous regional conflict in the Horn of Africa.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Allow me to begin by welcoming the presence of President Guelleh in the Council, together with his delegation, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti. We thank the President of Djibouti for his statement. We also appreciate having heard from our colleague, the ambassador of Eritrea.

The presence of President Guelleh in the Council is important. We have already been briefed by the Prime Minister of Djibouti, and today we have been briefed by the President. This seems to indicate that the Government of Djibouti feels very strongly that the issue at hand is very serious and should really come to the attention of this Council.

South Africa regrets the tension between Eritrea and Djibouti. Those two friendly countries are neighbours and would wish to see the tension reduced by the withdrawal of troops from the border area. We hope and believe that the visit by the Chair of the African Union Commission, Mr. Jean Ping, to Asmara would be a good opportunity for Eritrea to convey its side of the story.

We regret that the fact-finding mission did not visit Asmara, because we believe that Eritrea should also have an opportunity to tell its side of the story. We believe that mutual trust needs to be developed between those two countries to enable them to address the issues at hand, particularly that of the demarcation of the border.

We note that in his statement Ambassador Desta referred to the occasion when the President of Eritrea and the President of Djibouti spoke on this matter, but we hope that such communications will be intensified so as to build enough trust to deal with the issues at hand.

Otherwise, the concerns the President of Djibouti expressed today echo what was said by the Prime Minister of Djibouti before this Council and constitute a cry for the Council to help address them. We hope that both parties will use the opportunities arising from being friendly African countries, being neighbours, the opportunities that are provided not only by the African Union but also by the Arab League to try to find a way out of this situation. It would be regrettable if the situation came to the point where the Council would be forced to take action on this matter.

Lastly, let me also pay tribute to Djibouti's contribution to finding a solution in Somalia. Djibouti has hosted the parties in Somalia, and they produced an agreement that is currently being implemented. The situation in Somalia is indeed a nightmare, as President Guelleh has said. The contribution to Somalis that Djibouti has made to try to find a way out of that nightmare is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): Croatia too would like to join other Council members in welcoming the President of Djibouti, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, as well as his delegation, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and thanking him for the timely and comprehensive briefing he has provided us. We also welcome the participation of the representatives of Eritrea at today's meeting.

We take note of the relative calm on the ground in the region at this time, but at the same time, we are cognizant of the overall fragility of the situation and its potential for further flare-ups in an already volatile region.

In that connection, we would like to recall the Presidential statement of 12 June this year (S/PRST/2008/20), in which all parties, but in particular Eritrea, were called on to exercise restraint, to withdraw their forces to the status quo ante and to resolve the dispute through dialogue and peaceful means, including through third-party mediation. The proposals of the fact-finding mission are a step in that direction. At the same time, however, the refusal of Eritrea to accept the Secretary-General's good offices is regrettable.

That being said, we welcome all efforts by the United Nations and by regional organizations, in particular the African Union and the League of Arab States, to try to help the parties de-escalate tensions and move towards a peaceful solution to the crisis. We sincerely hope that those efforts will be honestly and wholeheartedly accepted by all parties.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to begin by welcoming to the Council His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of Djibouti. His presence here demonstrates his country's willingness to find a negotiated solution to the situation in which Eritrea is placing it. We also welcome the presence of our colleague, the Permanent Representative of Eritrea, and of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti.

Costa Rica deeply regrets that, despite the sacrifices that continue to be faced by the peoples of the Horn of Africa, they are seeing their lives threatened once again by the scourge of another war that could, as President Guelleh quite rightly stated, divert resources essential for their development and well-being. My delegation is concerned at Eritrea's lack of willingness to establish a dialogue with

Djibouti in order to find a peaceful solution to their differences, despite the many calls made by the international community, including the African Union, the Arab League and the Council itself. On the other hand, we recognize the actions carried out by Djibouti. We believe that the position taken by Eritrea in its dispute with Djibouti reflects serious disregard of its obligations and a disturbing lack of respect for international law that threatens international peace and security.

Costa Rica is convinced that compliance with the provisions of the Council is not an obligation only for countries that believe them to be in keeping with their national interests and intentions. The Charter of the United Nations deserves respect and attention, and the international community deserves the peace of mind of knowing that the countries that participate responsibly in the Organization are seriously trying to build a better world.

That is why we believe that we must now appeal once again to Eritrea and to Djibouti to commit themselves, in addressing their differences, to resolving them by engaging in dialogue, adhering to international law and fully using the peaceful mechanisms at their disposal. The Council should play an important role in facilitating such a course of action. It is only by implementing mechanisms for peaceful dispute settlement involving both diplomatic and legal considerations and participation by regional organizations that we will be able to ensure a lasting solution to the conflict.

Finally, we would like to stress that it is important that both parties explore the possibility of resolving their border dispute through new agreements resulting from arbitration and mediation and from recourse to higher legal bodies if necessary.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): First of all, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, for his presence and his statement to the Council. I also thank the representative of Eritrea for his participation.

My delegation has followed closely the situation along the border between Djibouti and Eritrea. We remain concerned about the sharp escalation in tension and the suspension of diplomatic relations between the two countries as a result of their border dispute. In our judgement, that dispute, if left unchecked, could spill over into a wider regional conflict, with greater potential consequences.

We call for maximum restraint by both parties, for their commitment to a ceasefire and for a withdrawal by Eritrea of its forces to the status quo ante. We urge the two countries to cooperate and to engage in diplomatic efforts to diffuse tension and generate political space for a peaceful resolution of the dispute.

My delegation commends and supports the mediation efforts of the African Union, the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to find ways to end the conflict and the dispute. We encourage the Secretary-General, in coordination with regional stakeholders, to use his offices to develop confidence-building measures and engage both parties in dialogue with a view to finding a peaceful solution to the dispute that is in conformity with the fundamental principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to join preceding speakers in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of Djibouti, and to thank him for his statement. I also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti and his delegation and thank the representative of Eritrea for his statement.

We in Libya are extremely concerned at the crisis that has erupted in recent months between two brotherly nations, in particular since those countries belong to a region that has long been beset by problems. Most people in that region are suffering the effects of war, including lack of security, food and medicine. It is regrettable that, thus far, the Security Council has not been able to come up with effective solutions to the problems in the region.

Like other countries, we believe that the situation between Djibouti and Eritrea could be worse; the border area is relatively calm. While we welcome that fact, we are still concerned at the lack of progress made thus far in finding a peaceful solution. It is also regrettable that the good offices of the Council, of regional organizations and other actors have not been received positively, which could lead to a new crisis. Fighting erupted again in June, and I believe that both countries are duty-bound to reply favourably to the message issued by the Council that same month.

As a member of the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Libya calls for the implementation of the resolutions adopted by those organizations. We welcome the repeated efforts of those organizations to help the two countries to resolve their dispute. We call on both parties to use those proposals to their best advantage.

With regard to the evident differences between the two brotherly countries with respect to the demarcation of their border, we hope that they will be able to reach an agreement on the international legal instruments to be used to resolve the issue once and for all. We insist on the need to continue to seek a peaceful solution to the crisis. We support the good offices of the Secretary-General and call on both parties to respond positively to them.

Mr. Suescum (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome President Guelleh and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti, as well as Ambassador Desta of Eritrea, and thank them for being with us today and for their briefings.

We view Eritrea's presence and participation in today's meeting, and Mr. Ping's visit to Asmara on behalf of the African Union, as signals that Eritrea intends to interact much more actively with the international community — the only way to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict. In that respect, we urge Eritrea to respond to the good offices of the Secretary-General, which we fully support, and to the efforts of the African Union in particular. We further urge Eritrea to honour its obligations under the United Nations Charter and to heed the appeals of the Security Council, inter alia, to withdraw its troops in order to return to the status quo ante and to create a positive climate for dialogue between the parties and the potential facilitation of the mediators.

The Council can act only on the basis of the facts provided to it by the parties to a conflict. If the situation continues without the cooperation of one party, the United Nations will have no choice but to defend the territorial integrity of Djibouti. In the light of the contacts and dialogue that have taken place, Djibouti appears to be the threatened party and to be fulfilling its obligations under the Charter.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): The United States would like to thank President Ismail Omar Guelleh for travelling all the way to New York to brief the Council on the continuing crisis between Djibouti and Eritrea. We appreciate the importance of the President's participation in this meeting and the content of his message. We take his message seriously. We hope that the same is true for all members of the Council and that we shall take appropriate note of and respond to the challenge that he has presented to the Council.

The United States also welcomes the presence of the Foreign Minister of Djibouti and of the Permanent Representative of Eritrea.

The United States remains extremely concerned about Eritrea's unprovoked attack on Djiboutian forces and its subsequent refusal to withdraw its troops or engage in peaceful dialogue to defuse the situation. We commend the Djiboutian Government for its efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

The United Nations fact-finding mission to Djibouti clearly documented the extent to which the Djiboutian Government has worked to resolve the crisis peacefully. The Government of Eritrea, however, has defied the international community by attacking its neighbour in a violent confrontation that left 44 Djiboutian soldiers dead and many more missing. The Eritrean Government has refused to cooperate or even to issue visas to the fact-finding mission dispatched by the United Nations to investigate the situation. The Government of Eritrea's failure even to acknowledge the existence of the problem, let alone the seriousness of the situation, is unacceptable.

The Security Council should take appropriate action to find a resolution to the crisis. The United Nations fact-finding mission has recommended that the United Nations dispatch a high-level envoy to the area to engage with Eritrea to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. The fact-finding mission further noted that "[i]n the event that the offer by the United Nations is again rebuffed by Eritrea, the matter should be referred to the Security Council for appropriate action" (*S/2008/602, para. 62*). The report's finding that "[a] sovereign country is being drawn into a crippling and unaffordable military mobilization, to deal with a situation that may ultimately threaten national, regional and international peace" (*ibid.*) reinforces the seriousness of those recommendations.

In line with the report's recommendations, the United States calls on the Secretary-General to dispatch a high-level envoy immediately. Eritrea

should be given a clear time frame in which to accept the assistance of the United Nations, the African Union or any other State, organization or body that is acceptable to both parties to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. However, if Eritrea rebuffs any such effort towards resolution, the Council must react appropriately. If we fail to do so, not only do we risk yet another costly and tragic war in an area that has already suffered tremendously, but we also jeopardize the credibility of the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

Like my colleagues who have spoken before me, I warmly welcome to New York the President of the Republic of Djibouti, His Excellency Mr. Guelleh, and thank him for his briefing to the Security Council. We also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of Eritrea for his statement.

Djibouti and Eritrea have tense relations arising from their border dispute. We deeply regret that tension and note that, following the outbreak of the border dispute between them in June, the Security Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/20) on 12 June. We believe that the most important thing at present is for the parties, in the interests of their bilateral relations and of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa, to remain calm and exercise restraint so as to prevent the situation from deteriorating further.

We are always in favour of resolving differences through dialogue and negotiation, and we are opposed to the use of military means. We expect Djibouti and Eritrea to start a dialogue as soon as possible and to seek a solution to their differences through consultations on an equal footing. We also support the mediation efforts made by the United Nations Secretary-General and the regional organizations such as the African Union and the Arab League. We also call on Djibouti and Eritrea to cooperate with those efforts. We support the Security Council's continuing positive and constructive role in promoting that both sides resolve their differences through dialogue and negotiation.

I shall now resume my function as President of the Council.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.